

## Contributions

### WOMEN OF THE BIBLE—My Favorite Character

#### A SYMPOSIUM

BY

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#### Mary

There are many Marys spoken of in the New Testament scriptures. There was Mary the mother of Christ, "blessed among women and highly favored of God." There was Mary, wife of Cleophas, who brought sweet spices to anoint the dead body of her Lord. There was Mary Magdalene, that Mary so wonderfully healed of Christ, that Mary of whom the poet writes.

"Not she with traitorous kiss her Master stung,  
Not she denied Him with unfaithful tongue.  
She, when apostles fled, could dangers brave,  
Last at His cross, and earliest at His grave."

There was Mary the mother of Mark, that Mary at whose house were many gathered together praying for Peter's deliverance from prison. There was Mary of Rome, to whom Paul sends greeting, that Mary who ministered lovingly to the apostles.

But none of these is my Mary, but the Mary who invites my love and interest and sympathy and admiration is "that Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped His feet with her hair, "It was not the woman who like Miriam helped to emancipate a mighty nation from bondage and who led her sisters in a great song of triumph because of the great victory Israel had achieved. It was not that woman who, like Deborah, arose, a mother in Israel, sitting in the chair of state, judge of the nation to deliver, once again, the Israelites from their enemies. It was not that woman, who like the pious Anna, preached in Jerusalem in the temple a sermon on redemption thru Jesus Christ. There was no mighty deed of valor, there was no mighty prophecy, nor inspired truth nor sublime thought by which her name should live forever—but it was that Mary whose heart overflowed with love to the Lord, and whose love found expression in that beautiful act of anointing the dear Savior's brow and feet with the precious, costly spikenard, and then tenderly wiping, with her own soft luxuriant hair, those dear feet, so weary with long wanderings over the hills of Judea, seeking and saving the lost.

My Mary was that Mary of whom the Savior spoke such sweet words of commendation as shall be sweetest music in all the world to us, if "some sweet day, by and by" they fall from His lips upon our ears, "She hath done what she could"—that Mary of whom the Savior said "Whosoever this gospel shall be preached, in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." Wherever the name of Jesus is known, wherever the gospel tidings of salvation are proclaimed, wherever the

sweet story of the cross is told, there shall Mary's loving deed be told for a memorial of her Jesus and Mary, two names forever associated, forever inseparable because of Mary's little ministry of love. The apostles should do greater works, they should be given greater powers, they should brave greater dangers, they should spread His name far and wide, but only Mary's ministry of love was promised an immortal memory.

Quiet, gentle, loving, reflective, receptive and teachable, choosing that better part which shall not be taken from her, Mary sits at the Master's feet, her soul drinking in His words of life and love. As the flower opens to the bright warm rays of the sun and receives and absorbs its light, gradually unfolding into new beauty and giving forth its sweet fragrance, so Mary sits at Jesus' feet, her heart open to His influence, her soul pouring out its devotion and affection in unselfish homage. But while Mary sits thus quietly at the Master's feet, so apparently inactive that her busy sister complains of her to the Master, "Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?" she has all the energy and activity needed, when activity is called for. She needs but be told "The Master is come and calleth for thee" and she quickly rises to the occasion.

And so she is to us a beautiful teacher and example. Shall we not learn this beautiful lesson from her, that while the harvest is so plenteous, and God is calling us to active service and labor and ministry yet there are times when He would have us just sit down quietly, passively, receptively, shutting out the world's voices and even the Macedonian cries, and listen to His voice speaking to our souls?

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#### Ruth

The beautiful idyl, Ruth the Gleaner, portrays a character whose superior excellence and worth and whose sweet and saintly spirit have prefixed her name to the Book of Life on earth, for she became an heir of the promises, a royal mother among God's chosen people. She was no queen, no saint, no prophetess, only a simple Moabitish maiden, a gleaner in the harvest field, who won her title not by birth but by her noble deeds.

Born amidst idolatry of the darkest type, in a nation whose god was the cruel Chemosh, she had grown up pure. She became a wife in an Israelitish home and breathed the beneficent spirit of a family of Judah. She soon discerned in Israel's God the fountain of a purer and holier religion than the Moabitish idolatry afforded. And in such a God she henceforth trusted. When death had made the fair Ruth a widow in Moab, and the stricken Naomi, broken-hearted and alone, sought to return to her Judean home, the resolute self sacrifice and self forgetful love as revealed by Ruth have stamped themselves on the very heart of the world. In that sacred moment in which she bade a long farewell to friends and native land, on which

depended a future that no prophetic eye could ken, she forgot everything to remember her filial duty toward Naomi. She made the choice "to trust beneath Jehovah's wings" freely, completely, and without reserve. She like Mary, chose the better part that could not be taken away from her.

"Intreat me not to leave thee,  
And to return from following after thee:  
For whither thou goest, I will go;  
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge;  
Thy people shall be my people,  
And thy God my God;  
Where thou diest, will I die,  
And there will I be buried;  
The Lord do so to me, and more also,  
If aught but death part thee and me."

The words are rhythmical and musical with the burden of love and devotion, and breathe the sweet and gentle aroma of a noble, enduring spirit.

The wanderers tired, homeless, and friendless entered Bethlehem alone. To Naomi the past seemed but a failure, and the future hopeless. She had come to seek again the Protector of her declining years in the Bethlehem of her youth. But the sweet summertime of prosperity for the faithful Ruth was just dawning. It was in early spring and the fields were ripe with the golden grain. They were very poor, but Ruth was not one of those high spirits that could more easily starve than stoop. She proved her unfaltering friendship and undying faithfulness toward Naomi in her purpose to glean. Before Ruth's honor was this humility. Her life seems a paradox; she was made the least that she might become the greatest. For love she would tan her cheek and blister her hands, and at eventide carry home to the feeble Naomi her sheaves of gleanings.

As the star guided the wise men to the infant Jesus, so God's hand conducted Ruth to the field of Boaz. This seeming chance was real Providence, for soon God joined the hearts of Ruth and Boaz, "the mighty man of wealth."

In the birth of their son Obed another link was added in the chain Christward. The joy here was but an earnest of the joy hereafter.

"Far from her home, fatigued, oppressed,  
Here she has found her place of rest;  
An exile still, yet not unblessed,  
While she can cling to Thee."

CLARA W. MILLER.

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#### Mary

My favorite character among the women of the Bible is Mary. This is not the "other Mary," the mother of James, also known as Mary of Cleopas, neither is it Mary Magdalene, nor yet is it the Mary whom St. Paul saluted as one "who bestowed much labor on you." But it is "that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment," Mary, the complement of her sister Martha. Without a doubt, Mary, the mother of our Lord, is the most favored of all women, but her sacred mission